

# THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

EDITED BY

PHILIP MAIRET AND ALEC VIDLER

## Special Number on CHINA

MAY 1951  
Vol. II No. 5

ASIATIC AWAKENING

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COMMUNIST CHINA

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## CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| MONTHLY LETTER - - - - -  | 171 |
| <i>The Asiatic Awakening</i>  |     |
| INTERIM - - - - -   | 178 |
| <i>Frontier Luncheons—Christians in Industry—The Meeting<br/>        of East and West</i> |     |
| FACTS AND IDEALS IN COMMUNIST CHINA - - - - -   | 179 |
| By "Observator"   |     |
| THE CHURCH IN CHINA - - - - -   | 195 |
| By "Caleb"  |     |
| THE FINAL ARBITER - - - - -   | 205 |
| By Douglas Thompson   |     |
| REVIEWS - - - - -   | 213 |
| <i>New China : Three Views—Religion in Chinese Garment</i>                                |     |
| By F. G. Healey and Max Warren.   |     |

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# THE FRONTIER

## A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

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Vol. II. No. 5.

MAY 1951

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### Monthly Letter

IT is notoriously difficult in this country to form reliable judgments about what is now proceeding in China. The vastness of the scene, the immense importance of this revolution in the general world-tension of to-day and the variety of interests of our own people which are involved—all those colour and often distort impressions transmitted through our over-occupied press, which indeed seems to have made few efforts to present an adequate picture.<sup>1</sup> There is a temptation to paint the whole in the Red and White of political prejudice; and the high regard in which the Chinese people have always been held in this country heightens our concern. Most of those who have known China well come back with a lasting love and admiration for its people and their culture, which have always had "a good press" in Britain, and it is especially hard for us to see the Chinese being drawn into the ranks of our ideological adversaries. A more technical difficulty is that the most authentic reports of observers returning from China may disagree on matters of fact as well as judgment, because conditions vary in different places, and are rapidly changing. When *The Frontier* was asked to provide material for a balanced opinion on the Chinese situation, we sought,

<sup>1</sup> A distinguished exception is the series of articles on *Communism in China*, published by the *Manchester Guardian*, November 17 to December 22 of last year.

therefore, to assemble a group of the best advisers available. We have had the great advantage of their generous help, and through them, of the writers whose articles follow this Letter. Our own task in this editorial is merely to introduce what follows with some observations, chiefly of a historical character, for which we alone are responsible, though these too are shaped largely by our advisers' conversation and criticism.

### *Two Main Causes. (1) Hunger*

This Chinese revolution would have occurred in one form or another, even without the Russian-trained Marxists who have succeeded in exploiting the situation. It is a product of conditions prevailing over most of Asia as well as of those peculiar to China, conditions of which two are of dominant importance—hunger and the impact of Western civilization. The first is endemic in Asia, and is not simply due to inefficiency in the production, transport or distribution of food. There are regions, such as almost the whole of India, where the soil has been ignorantly farmed for centuries and has become stabilized at a minimum of productivity. But the hunger of the Chinese is due neither to indolence—for their industry is exemplary—nor lack of skill. Their intensive farming has preserved their land's fertility for ages: the Chief of the U.N.O. department on Land Use lately wrote that “Western agriculturists who have worked in China insist that they have learned more than they have taught.”<sup>1</sup> But like most habitable areas of the Far East, China is densely inhabited by people who multiply up to the limit of subsistence whilst their rulers tax them down to that limit. For ages therefore, Eastern peoples have accepted hunger as a given and normal condition of their existence, hardly thinking a constant, still less an abundant, supply of food to be possible. The idea that it may be, and

<sup>1</sup> See *Fact and Theory about China's land*, reprinted in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (Chicago) for December, 1950.

that there is plenty elsewhere, has seeped into the East during the age of commerce and travel, has been strengthened by literacy and propaganda ; and finally came the second world war, when the well-equipped and copiously fed armies of the West swarmed over so much of the ancient continent. This seems to be one cause of what is called Asia's awakening and of the latest and greatest Chinese revolution.

### (2) *Western Imperialism*

The other main cause—the hegemony of the West—is revealed most clearly as it fades away. In India and elsewhere Western governments have resigned their direct responsibility, or show such willingness to do so in the near future that other forces are arising to fill their places. The one Asiatic nation which had made itself into a great industrial power, Japan, has collapsed in defeat, and with it has foundered a great deal of the trade and industry between and within the lands of east and south Asia. The crumbling away of so many commercial connections has had deplorable effects upon the industrial, trading and professional classes dependent on them, and on the prospects of the students in the cities. These are new social classes in Asia. The old Asiatic societies consisted of impoverished masses ruled by relatively small governing groups, which were dominated by individuals and families often of fantastic wealth ; but these were elevated cultures, older than our own, whose refinements of life often spread in some degree throughout the masses. The new middle class is a social effect of Western dominance. At the same time Western manufactures have steadily supplanted the craft products of Asia, to the detriment of the workers who lived by indigenous skills, while Western printing, films and radio have undermined the learning of the traditional scribes. These influences took most of the structural strength out of Asiatic society, a fact that was masked so long as the great Western Powers maintained fairly settled conditions. It is their partial withdrawal that has uncovered the shaken

foundations of Asiatic life and thrown upon Asiatics themselves the responsibility for building a new order. China, where Western control was always divided and limited to key positions, has been in a politically plastic state ever since the Manchu dynasty fell. Since then its history has been a series of efforts to achieve some kind of national constitution that could endure in the modern political and economic world.

### *The Christian Contribution*

The impulse for these movements arose naturally in the areas of most contact with the West, and in the new middle classes. It was here that China was acquiring the means to technical civilization and the education to use them, in an atmosphere filled with the new and stirring ideas of democracy, nationalism, and later of world-communism. It was here that the old forms of Chinese life were subsiding and its culture disintegrating under the influence of Western ideas forcibly propagated in newspapers, magazines, films and radio ; and here that the proletarian and student classes came into being. Here too, Christianity was a force. It was less localized, Roman Catholicism especially establishing itself widely in rural China ; and, in a society whose lack of institutions made Sun Yat Sen, its first great modern revolutionary, describe it as "a heap of loose sand ", Christianity was from the first a unifying force. The Protestant missions brought it in a variety of forms, yet with a modernizing and uniting power that extended to the Chinese language itself. When translating the Bible they used the new style of the written and printed word, which was that of ordinary conversation instead of the artificial phraseology of the classics, and did much to further its acceptance. This change brought the hope of literacy within the range of the common man, and in less than a century it had become the medium of public opinion and of a new Chinese literature. In the Christian missions also spread the new education, no longer limited to the subtleties of the Confucian learning but of a

range comparable to that of American and European schooling. Christians are numerically a very small minority of China's teeming population, but their formative contribution to the Chinese movements of reform is of great significance. It must not be exaggerated, nor must we underestimate the vision and constructive energy of Chinese scholars and others unconnected with the Church, who have played the major part in all these reform movements for a century past. Their efforts, as well as Western practical ideas, have shaped China's nationalist and reformist aspirations, but Christianity has done so too.

### *Christian Co-operation*

Its importance is shown by the fact that, except for the relatively small Mohammedan areas, Christianity is the only religion of which the Government finds it necessary to take account. A kind of "concordat" has been contrived with the Protestant churches on the basis of propaganda statements signed by their leaders. True, these were arrived at by what seems to us more like sharp political practice than genuine consultation. But it is in no way surprising that the will to co-operate with the effective political power, on the part of most Chinese Christians, is not only sincere but even enthusiastic. Christianity has taught them to value the works of corporal mercy, heroism on behalf of the poor, and distrust of the rich, and considering Chinese needs the professed aims of the Communist leaders are from this point of view at least plausible. Thus far, too, the official attitude towards Christianity is no worse than intellectually contemptuous; religion is tolerated as a vestige of dark ages that will soon fade away in the light of Communist re-education: Christians can therefore be tolerated as harmless so long as they have no practical social influence. That reservation however, is one that soon becomes a serious social disability. Communism does not long tolerate even mental non-co-operation, but soon demands submission to indoctrination and ultimately something like open con-

fession of its idolatry of the state. Will Christians in China be able to survive somehow, even in positions of some significance, as they do, after all, in Russia? And will the actions of the new Government agree with its professions sufficiently to command their continued enthusiasm?

### *What of the Future?*

Articles in the following pages can help readers to see some of the realities behind these questions. To answer them one would need insight into the political mystery of the real relation of the Communist leaders to the rest of the Government, between whom it is certainly an issue of a fierce, secret struggle for power. So far the Kremlin's advocates must be in the ascendent; every opinion that the Chinese movement would develop on more liberal lines has proved illusory. There is a fairly regular sequence of measures by which Moscow-trained Communists secure absolute power over conquered peoples, and events in China have closely followed it, with adaptations as required to local conditions. The more genial and tolerant period, the "popular front" in which all kinds of co-operation are solicited and encouraged, is passing into the tougher period of "social engineering" when everything is firmly regulated, labour camps fill up with prisoners being re-conditioned and executions multiply. China's entry into the Korean war, most unnecessary from its own point of view, goes to confirm its leaders' fealty to Russia, and has made their government more terrorist. Yet it is important to note that, so far as we can see, whatever authority the Russians exercise is by Chinese consent—that is of C.P. members who are Chinese—and could, presumably, be annulled by Chinese decision. If the determining factor is national interest as these people see it, it is more than possible that they will one day see Chinese and Russian interests diverging. The hope that the Chinese will ultimately make something different and better of Communism cannot be abandoned, nor is it easy to believe that China can ever be reduced to the standard

pattern of a Marxian state. China has been invaded before by so many conquering dynasties and ideologies, has surrendered to them, absorbed them and finally accommodated them to her own immemorial way of life. This time, it is true, the invading system is striking deliberately at the roots of this resilience—at the Confucian family system, at the very language and traditional philosophy of the people. Eradicate these and China could indeed be changed—or destroyed. But it would take time, and in one respect the régime works against time. Some of the observers who express most respect for what is good in the present Chinese régime have the least belief that it can raise the living standards of the masses. If it cannot, its term is limited : many think it will meet the “final arbiter” described in the third article that follows this Letter.

All this, however, is speculation : one thing that appears sadly certain is that the Christian communities of China will become isolated for as long as we can see into the future, debarred from the co-operation of those in other countries, even from personal contacts with them. Soon very few European ministers of Protestant churches will remain ; they are officially advised that they must leave when their furloughs are due and they are unlikely to be re-admitted. Many have gone away against their will, at the regretful request of congregations whose position with the government would be compromised if they stayed. Their fear of prejudicing the position of Chinese friends, even by statements made after leaving, is a silent comment on the situation. The Roman Catholic missions have other difficulties, partly consequent upon their different theological outlook ; for where there is no Chinese priest available there can be no mass, no sacraments and therefore no church : foreign priests are thus indispensable ; and few have in fact left China ; whereas Protestant ministries could be supplied from the congregations. The Catholics have also acquired land in many rural areas, incurring the immense disabilities now attached to those invidiously

classed as "landlords", and their congregations, thus doubly compromised, have to carry on the same struggle for the right to co-operate with the government as loyal nationalists, whilst they plead for freedom of meeting and teaching.

In these circumstances it becomes increasingly difficult to know, still more to interpret, what is happening to the Chinese churches. Our advisers, perhaps especially those with the latest experience in China, urge those outside China to place confidence in their Chinese fellow Christians, whose responsible leaders thoroughly merit their confidence, and urgently need their prayers, and other forms of support. A real responsibility of to-day is to keep this spirit of unity in separation.

## INTERIM

### Frontier Luncheons

The last of the present series of Frontier Luncheons will be held on Wednesday, June 6th, at the Royal Empire Society. Mr. Henry Brooke, M.P., will speak about Housing, and Miss Violet Markham, C.H., J.P., will be in the chair. Tickets (5s.) may be obtained from the Christian Frontier, 8 The Cloisters, Windsor Castle.

Sir Arthur fforder's address on "Encounters with Doubt" which was given at the Luncheon on April 4th will be published in the June issue of *The Frontier*.

Another series of Luncheon meetings will probably be arranged in the autumn.



### Christians in Industry

The annual conference of the Christian Frontier Council this year, to be held in the autumn, will be concerned with the subject of industry. In this connexion the Council has been fortunate in acquiring the help of Mr. John Lawrence, formerly British press attaché in Moscow. He is giving a substantial part of his time to the service of the Council and is concentrating on the field of industrial relations.



### "The Meeting of East and West"

This is to be the subject of the Church Union's Summer School of Sociology at Oxford from July 30th to August 3rd. The introductory lecture will be delivered by Dr. V. A. Demant of Christ Church; the Rev. Oliver Tomkins will lecture on the impact of the West on the East, and the Bishop in Egypt will outline both the Church's vision of the East and the secular policy of the West towards it. There will be other lectures on specific Eastern questions, and the deliberations of the school are to be summarized by the Rev. Francis House, the head of religious broadcasting at the B.B.C. The School is to be held at Lady Margaret Hall, and particulars of membership may be obtained from Miss H. Highley, 9 Talbot Road, Highgate, London, N.W. 6.

## FACTS AND IDEALS IN COMMUNIST CHINA<sup>1</sup>

THE story of China since the coming of the Communists has been the story of what the Communist movement has done, and how the nation has responded to it. The first and dominant fact is of course, the power, the ideology, the programme of the Communist Party, which is out to remould the nation into a new society. Let us first therefore say a word about the Communists themselves and then turn to what is actually happening in the countryside, the cities, and the minds of ordinary people.

First, it would be impossible to deny that Communism has created a large army of young idealists who are sincerely and completely devoted to world Communism, who believe that all truth is in it, and that its victory in history, bringing the classless society, is certain. These men give of themselves completely and unselfishly and, within the limits of Communist thinking, are realistic and careful planners and workers. They believe that everyone can be converted to

<sup>1</sup> With acknowledgments to the Study Department of the World Council of Churches. This article is based upon part of a Study document specially re-edited for *The Frontier* by the author.

Communism. There is no human being so evil as to be beyond re-education. This army of devoted workers is the backbone of Chinese Communism, and the source of its power. The top leaders of the government pay special attention to them; their political training never ceases, so that they may have no time or temptation for other ideas than Communist ones. Their zeal is responsible for many of the great accomplishments of Chinese Communism in the last few years.

Secondly, however, Chinese Communism is in the hands of men who are more cynical and more extreme, both at the top and at the bottom. At the top there is a struggle for power, but it seems clear that the nationalist group is losing, and the pro-Russian group is in charge. There have been several clear cases in which the Peking government has had to choose against the interests of Chinese people's welfare, and for the interests of the Soviet Union and the world Communist movement which she leads. Observers in Europe have verified that Chinese workers have been conscripted for service in Russia, as far west as Poland. It is probable that much of the grain which has been shipped out of famine areas of China toward Manchuria, was also destined for the Soviet Union. And the Sino-Soviet Pact shows how little China can expect in return.

At the bottom also, among lower officials there is extremism of another type. Wherever Communists have gone they have had to depend on the support of groups which were dissatisfied. They have had to encourage ambitious people to make trouble, and have taken into their organization many former bandits and other groups whom society usually controls. These people have learned Communism in political training schools but they have not learned to improve their personal characters, or to govern wisely. They use the power of the Communist movement to gain power for themselves, to destroy rivals even at the expense of destroying an institution of which they are a part. The attitude of the People's Government toward these groups is

a double one. On the one hand they claim that this kind of party worker is being slowly re-educated and controlled. On the other hand they encourage and use these bandit-like elements in most cases where it is to the interest of Communism. Hospitals, factories and all private institutions free of government control are in danger of being wrecked by labour agitation or staff rivalries promoted by men with Communist connections.

Thirdly, Chinese Communism has been adapted to China itself, and this has produced certain changes from Communism in other parts of the world. The most important of these I believe is moral idealism, and the emphasis which is laid on personal character in the movement itself. Chinese Communists do not neglect hard-headed planning for production, industrialization and war, such as we see in Russia. But they spend more time on education and criticism. The second specially Chinese character is the continuation of bargaining even under the Communists, and the emphasis on persuasion. One sees it in government offices where discussions on procedure go on day after day, regardless of office efficiency. One sees it also in a hundred ways in daily life, which often manages to soften the impact of government orders.

Lastly we come to the effect of Communist ideology on the actual business of government in village and city, and here we have a confusing picture. There is no question that the Communist government is sincere in its plans to build a strong China in the framework of the world Communist revolution. In order to do this, the Communists must enlist the co-operation of a large number of Chinese people. Two proclamations by the government dramatize this problem. The first, on April 19th, 1950, called for more self-criticism, not only in the Communist Party but by the people as a whole. The second, in June, called for more discipline and a purge of the whole New Democratic movement, that it might eliminate opportunists and do its work more efficiently.

The tragedy of these two pronouncements however is the tragedy of the whole Communist movement in China. Each of them must be interpreted within the framework of the total Communist programme. Never can this programme itself come under criticism. And those who are to be purged from the Party and the movement are precisely those who have thoughts which are independent of Communist ideology, and hence are "opposed to the people's revolution". The Communist party proclamation on self-criticism distinguishes two kinds: "... constructive and principled criticism, springing from a friendly and helpful attitude; not the destructive criticism made with a purpose of opposing the people's democratic system and the common platform, in order to sabotage discipline and leadership, to undermine the people's confidence and enthusiasm for progress and to create pessimism, despair and disunity".

If a farmer were to offer the criticism that in his village the people are starving because all the grain was taken in taxes, this would unquestionably be destructive criticism. If a Party member were to express too loudly his doubts about the control of Soviet Russia over his country, he would be marked for a purge under the more recent proclamation.

Communist ideology helps Communists to see some facts clearly and blinds them to others. Let us now turn to some of the facts of Chinese society under the Communists, and see how they compare with Communists pictures.

### *I. Rural China*

The most violent contrast between Communist propaganda and the facts is to be found in relation to country life. The theme of rural revolution and land reform is long familiar to students of the Chinese situation. The Chinese Communists for years after the long march were a rural party, and were successful in keeping their hold on rural areas and making their policies work there. There is undoubtedly a case for the drastic land reform which they have

in places carried out. The backbone of their strength during the war years and just after was probably the resentment of farmers against landlordism and usury, though it must be remembered that even in that time "land reform" and the coming of the "pa lu" (8th Route Army) meant destruction and terror to many millions of North China farmers rather than hope of better days. Some reasons for this we shall see later.

In the last two years however, with the conquest of the whole country, the policy of Chinese communism toward land reform and rural areas generally has changed radically. In theory this shift is described by the Communists themselves as a policy of greater moderation. Mao Tse-Tung and other leaders have emphasized that the redistribution of land in newly "liberated" areas must proceed slowly, according to careful plan, and that it must be careful to expropriate only the land of rich farmers and landlords and to leave the land of "middle farmers" alone. The emphasis has been shifted from redistribution of land, giving to each farmer a piece of his own soil, to the idea of increasing production and organizing co-operatives among farmers for the marketing of their goods. In their propaganda the Communists recognize that last year was a hard one for farmers. They blame it on the Kuomintang, on the floods, and every other cause except their own policies. But most of their propagandist energy is devoted to denying that there is any really serious rural problem, famine, guerilla activity, etc. They point to the tremendous stores of "public grain" as an example of rural prosperity, and to the many government activities in relief, co-operative marketing, providing seed grain to farmers, etc. They look forward to more mechanized farms, which implies much consolidation of farmland. Little has been said yet about collective farming for China, but it looms in the background. What, then are the facts in relation to this ideal picture?

It is impossible to talk about the facts in all of China, or to gather statistics to prove one's observations. But certain

realities stand out so vividly when one has been in China, and are so widely attested by experienced people free of Communist bias, that they must be reported as the truth as far as this writer can put it together :

1. The basic fact of rural China was, after the first few months of Communist control, abject grinding poverty, which in some places became mass starvation. For this condition the Communist government must take heavy, though not exclusive, responsibility because of its taxation policy. Other factors were the effect of years of war, and of unusual floods in the past year. But taxation was the deciding factor in most cases.

It is hard to get a general picture of taxation and what it means to the farmer. It is heavier in some areas than in others. But the author knows of tax loads varying from about 60 per cent of the net proceeds of the land to well over 100 per cent. It is not uncommon in central China for peasants to have to sell their furniture, clothes, and other belongings in addition to their whole crop, to meet their tax bill. Land itself they cannot sell because it has no market value even if ownership is not frozen. The full extent of taxes is disguised by dividing them often into three categories. (i) The straight land tax which is often assessed without considering the productivity of the land. (ii) The "public grain", which in Communist theory is not a tax at all. It is a collection of grain by the People's Government for meeting the general needs of the people. According to the Communists it is simply the "people" pooling a part of their grain for their common use. In fact this grain is collected by officials and soldiers, stored in granaries along the railroad, and used in several ways. (a) It goes to feed over nine million government employees,<sup>1</sup> most of whom live now on a level somewhat above that of the people. (b) It is sent in large quantities to Manchuria

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes the army, much of which, with much of the civil service, was taken over from the Nationalists and kept on in accordance with earlier promises.

(this is fiercely denied by the Communists, but the fact is attested by many eye-witnesses who have seen the trains) from which we can surmise, since Manchuria is a grain surplus area, that it is sent further on, to Russia. (c) In theory this public grain is distributed in extreme famine areas as relief and as seed for next year's crop. The Communists used their tremendous stores of "public grain" in propaganda as an argument to prove that there was no famine in the spring of 1950. They have played up, complete with statistics, a number of their relief activities. But the fact seems to be that the famine was in great degree created by the collections of public grain, and that relief distributions have been haphazard or non-existent in most areas.

(iii) There is thirdly the drive to sell bonds, which the Communists also do not count as taxation. In theory this is voluntary, and amounts to purchasing bonds redeemable in up to five years in terms of a parity unit based on the prices of certain commodities. In fact the bonds have no value whatever in the eyes of Chinese. They are regarded as simply another tax. The sales methods have also hardly been voluntary. Government officials have done the canvassing. Men have been imprisoned without food until they agreed to buy. Whole groups, societies, etc. have been held in meeting by police power for up to forty-eight hours until they agreed to group responsibility for a certain quota. The ingenuity and variety of the more subtle forms of pressure used in the bond campaign would make a real contribution to the strategy of dictatorships elsewhere in the world.

The Communists have a justification for their tax policies which is somewhat more realistic than the rest of their propaganda. They point out that even at the expense of hardship, China must learn to pay its own way without depending on foreign loans or printing-press inflation. Oppressive taxation is the only way this can be done, as long as the government supports a personnel of nine million,

and wishes to carry out tremendous industrialization and military plans all under state direction and control. The only alternative would be to decentralize government authority, limit its control over the whole of China's economy and depend more on the free initiative of local communities and private citizens to develop China both economically and culturally. This, however, is contrary to Communist doctrine.

In fact the tax policy of the Communist government proceeds direct from its basic ideology. All the resources of the land belong not separately to the producers and workers on the land, but collectively to "the people" whose will is expressed in the programme of the government led by the Communist Party. Food should be apportioned in accordance with the scale of living which a worker deserves in terms of his record of contribution to the revolution. Hence the old Communists who have suffered through the long march and the war years, sometimes reduced to eating grass, are now the best fed. North China areas long "liberated" are less heavily taxed than central and south China, on the theory that these northern areas have given more to the cause already. Hence also it is not wrong from the Communist point of view to take the entire crop of a village as "public grain" leaving the farmer from two months' to two weeks' food with which to face the winter. The people may be told that when their food gives out the government will take it from the rich and relieve them. Or they may be told, as was the case in one section: "During the days of the war, we soldiers ate grass while you farmers reaped your crops. Now it's your turn to eat grass." So the process of taxation goes on with ruthless efficiency reducing to poverty those who were rich before, and to starvation those who were poor.

2. The second reality about rural conditions which stands out to the resident of China is that land reform is, and probably always has been, more an instrument of Communist power than a just redistribution of earning

power. Violent excesses are no longer the rule as they were a few years ago. But it is the rule that no landlord may charge rent on his land, even though the rent be reasonable, and that he must pay his land tax just the same. In land reform the landlord loses his land beyond what he and his family can cultivate, though the ruthless parcelling out of an equal plot to each person regardless of the person's needs or the land's fertility is no longer the rule. However, it must be remembered that the landlord or the relatively wealthy peasant was in the past not simply an economic overlord. He was likely to be the political power as well, and it is from this point of view that the Communists are most interested in him. They have not substituted village democracy on the whole for the landlord's rule, but rather the rule of the Communist-led state. Idle land and land of those who have fled reverts to the state. The state controls the process of redivision where it takes place.

3. The third striking fact which must be recorded is the universal rejection of the Communist-led government by rural people as a whole, which amounts in many areas especially in central and south China, to armed rebellion and guerrilla warfare. It would be wrong to over-estimate the power of this kind of resistance. It is almost entirely a gesture of despair on the part of peasants. At the same time it would be a serious mistake to suppose that Communism at the moment has the support of China's rural millions, or that it is in any literal sense a "people's movement".

4. A final point must be made about the more practical attitude of Communist leaders. It seems clear that they are not concerned about the mass starvation which has occurred in many areas. They are not concerned with the welfare of the people *as people*, but rather with developing certain classes and certain economic organizations for efficient rural production under their own control. If the price of future efficiency is mass starvation now, they are prepared to pay that price—to eliminate certain classes of people (small merchants, landlords, family-centred farmers,

etc.) who are incompatible with a Communist organization of society. It is official Communist doctrine that China is not over-populated, and that all famine and poverty problems come from bad distribution of goods. This is why so much attention has been paid to the development of marketing co-operatives and transportation. But in private it is admitted in many places that Communist leaders really think China to be badly over-populated. One source close to the Peking government reported the government leaders to be thinking in terms of reducing the population by 180 million people over a number of years.

## *II. Industry and Trade in the City*

The picture which Communist literature paints of industry and trade fits its theory of the New Democracy in which, although worker's nominees in the Communist Party control the state and thus have basic power, nevertheless there is a place for constructive private enterprise in the business of expanding industry according to the needs of the people and its government. The over-all economy is to be planned, and such industries developed as the government thinks wise. Most of this development is to take place in Manchuria and North China, to be near the coal reserves and to be free of temptation to become too closely linked with the "imperialist" economy of the free nations of the world. In this area heavy industry is emphasized, although in Shanghai and other sections the mass production of low cost consumers' goods is considered basic. State industry will parallel private industry in some fields, but in an "orderly" way to the benefit of all. Banks and many other business activities which are now highly competitive will be centralized and reduced in number. Labour and management must work together for a fair sharing of the benefits of industry and for production according to the "people's" needs.

This again is the theory presented in the propaganda, which does not reflect the facts that are clearest to those who

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live in the cities of China. Here the primary reality is again one of economic despair—of masses of small shopkeepers and craftsmen who cannot sell their goods, of workers who cannot find jobs, and of managers facing the bankruptcy of their businesses. It must be said for the Communist government that it has stabilized currency through its tax policies, and that it has rebuilt the transportation system on the whole. But, with the possible exception of the North-East, where the economy is under more strict Russian control, the government has not made possible a productive economy for trade and industry. Some of the reasons for this seem to be the following :

(a) Taxation must head the list. Every business operation is taxed, sometimes more than once. It would be impossible to list all these taxes, but an example of their minuteness and extent is seen in the fact that rag-pickers, and gatherers of stray pieces of wood from the hillsides, must now have licences for their activities in many villages. It is almost impossible to start a new business because of the taxes incidental to setting up. The whole complex network of small exchange of goods and services through which the common people have been used to keep each other alive is being destroyed, in order that a planned economy, centralized under government control, may be substituted. But as yet the government has not been able, except in a few cases, to provide jobs in its own economic system for these masses whose livelihood it is destroying.

(b) Capital is itself being destroyed and intimidated, first by taxation on new business, second because there is no guaranteed future for private enterprise. Although the present stage of society is officially described as "new democracy" in which private enterprise has a place, no time-table is set for the transition to "socialism" in which all industry will be under state control. Hence those who have savings in capital form do not dare risk new enterprises which may only be taken over by the government.

(c) Consumer purchasing power is intimidated. Those who have any money with which to buy goods do not dare demonstrate this fact, for fear of being forced to buy bonds, or of being subject to investigation of their financial affairs and higher taxes. It is to the advantage of the private citizen in China to appear as poor as possible.

(d) The position of labour in Communist China is of fundamental importance in the destruction of the old economy which we are describing. In the final analysis labour organization is entirely under the control of the government. In government-controlled industries, or those private industries toward which the government has taken a constructive line, we hear of unions "voluntarily" asking for cuts in wages and speed-ups in production. On the other hand, private businesses and other institutions break down through labour troubles. It is impossible to say how far Communist agents have actually stirred up such trouble, and how far they have contributed passively by granting to management no legal protection or authority. The government has certainly refused police protection to managers imprisoned by their workers, and has even refused to allow the firing of incompetent staff, or disciplinary action against workers who have refused to do assigned work. In these and many other ways the Communist-led government deprives management of the authority essential to the conduct of any institution, while at the same time it encourages actively or passively labour conflicts of all kinds. Wages in the days immediately following the Communist conquest rose sharply and have only been controlled again as industries have one by one come under direct government influence.

The result is that even older businesses cannot maintain a balanced budget except in those exceptional cases where the fellowship between management and *all* labourers is so profound that there are no possibilities of conflict.

(e) The final reason for depression in trade and industry is the operation of huge government trading organizations

(Mao Yi Kung Szu) which are in theory known as "co-operatives". These organizations collect produce from the factories and farms at higher prices than private merchants can afford and undersell these merchants again in the city. They can do this because they are subsidized by the state and get cheaper, sometimes free, transportation on the government railways. In some cases in North China the poor are given special permission to buy at these "co-operatives" at the lower prices they charge. In other cases only government employees, soldiers, labourers in government industries, members of the New Democratic Youth Corps and other approved persons may use these facilities. The picture seems to show so far that government trading "co-operatives" have succeeded in crippling, and in places eliminating private trading, but they have not succeeded in meeting the distribution needs of the whole economy, nor have they solved the problem of helping all the bankrupt merchants and shopkeepers to make a living. They have succeeded in giving more privilege and security to the class of government-employed or protected folk, at the expense of the masses of Chinese people.

What is the government attitude toward this general decay of the economic life of the people? It seems to be two-fold, one of deep concern, yet of indifference.

In the first place it seems that the government does not care about the fate of the millions of small traders and shopkeepers, or even about independent producers who do not produce what is called for in the government plan. This is a strong statement and is probably not true of all government officials. But it is the impression given by the government as a unit. The wreck of the old society must be torn down in order that the new society may be built. If masses of people lose their livelihood in the process, they must find their place in the new order, in a more "productive" vocation. If they do not believe in the ideology of Communism and want to stay clear of its control, their future is grim, for the new order will include indoctrination classes

along with work. If the new industries which the Communists plan cannot be built up in time to absorb the masses who are now losing their jobs as a result of Communist tactics, then many of these jobless will starve. This starvation is accepted by the Communists as the price of "building a new China".

On the other hand the government is deeply concerned about the fact that not only trade, but also productive industry, is going bankrupt under the influences mentioned above. This is not according to their plan. Their picture of the problem is not of course that given above. Their propaganda rather blames industrial difficulties on the wrong kind of production—of luxury goods or of items already overproduced—or on the improper policies of management, in their salary and wage policies, their attitudes, sales policies etc. Their ideas and activities for solving the industrial crisis seem to be as follows.

(1) Loans with government backing, to essential industries which are losing money. This by itself is only a temporary expedient, for loans must come out of taxes which are themselves a root cause of the industrial breakdown. Furthermore, since these loans cannot be repaid, the end result will be that the government must underwrite all the losses of essential industries, perhaps operating these industries themselves at a loss.

(2) Through labour unions and direct government intervention, some industries have been reorganized around the production of a different line of goods. For example much publicity has been given to certain silk mills which have turned to the production of cheap cotton cloth "for the people". If the Communist economics were accurate this would be a good policy, for the wealthy class around which much consumer-goods industry was built in the past, has indeed been more or less wiped out. But the fact is that the poor are also poorer than before. Those who have suffered most in the first year or two of Communist rule are those who used to be able to buy cheap cotton and now cannot

afford even to buy rice. Not only the wealthy market has been minimized, but the mass market also.

(3) The co-ordination of the production of private and state industries in the light of the overall needs of the economy as the Communists see these needs. This means that private industries will no longer be private in a competitive sense.

There is no question but that the "new democracy" economy will be one planned entirely by the state, in which competition will not take place, and private entrepreneurs will be directed to certain industries which the state considers important. However, this economy is only a reality in certain places and industries to-day, and it is problematical that it ever can truly plan for the whole of Chinese society. More probably the state itself will have to supply capital for new enterprises, or the entrepreneur will have to place his capital completely at the state's disposal and become a state employee. In many parts of North China this is constantly happening with businesses which otherwise would go bankrupt. The result is that the Communists can really find no economic solution to the industrial problem short of thoroughly centralized, complete control and operation of the economic system. The half-way stage of the "new democracy" is gone already in Manchuria and is fading fast in the rest of China because it is an essentially unrealistic mixture of totalitarian control with free private initiative.

#### *Postscript*

The great question remains: are these problems of the Communist economy temporary or permanent? The summer and autumn of 1950 saw considerable economic stability in China. The spring famine passed by, leaving its millions of dead forgotten. Taxes, although high, seem to have found a more reasonable level, especially in the areas which have been longer under Communist control. Then, however, came the Korean war, which has again had its economic effects. Also increasing numbers of stories are

heard, of corruption among the Communists themselves, despite their almost miraculous record in this regard so far. It may be possible, if the Communists themselves can avoid a breakdown of morale, that they can build a social-economic system which guarantees at least a minimum of life to the masses of people in China, at the price of their freedom. The exceptions to this will always be, of course, those groups of people who are allowed to die according to the government plan—the soldiers who are sacrificed in war, the political prisoners, the people who are the victims of natural disasters which the government does not expend sufficient effort to alleviate, and the stubborn devotees of freedom who will not take their place in the ideology and economic order of the new society. But all of these groups together may come to no more than have died in China yearly in the past. Will the masses finally take the way to security in slavery which the totally planned society of the Communists seems to offer them?

I would not want to leave this picture however, without pointing out that there are people in China who are living creatively in this time, not merely in idealistic illusions about Communism, nor in sullen resentment against it. There are many ordinary citizens who seek, in this economic and political chaos, a place where they themselves can perform a constructive service to their fellowmen, and there they work. Often they are forced to participate in movements in which they do not believe. They may make statements which do not express their sentiments, in order to protect their right to do their creative job. But always they bargain for as much independence of action as they can get, and they find that Communists respect more this constructive, courageous witness in a practical situation than any amount of servility. Perhaps there is hope over the years that the insight of people who love their fellow men, and who serve them in practical ways, may wear the dogmatic edges off of Communist brutality and idealism.

“OBSERVATOR”

## THE CHURCH IN CHINA

THE Church in China to-day is conscious of living in Apostolic times. To a very large proportion of Christians the New Testament has come alive; the epistles no less than the Acts speak to their condition. The more educated are turning again to the study of Early Church History and finding there lessons for the times.

Problems which had previously seemed almost academic are now discussed with an urgent and lively interest. What should be the relation of the Church to State authority? What indeed is the Church? How are we to distinguish the true Church, the "fellowship of love", from the particular forms with which we are familiar, forms which wear a western dress? More basic still, what is the Gospel? What is the fundamental message which the Church exists to proclaim? Can we dissociate it from the various interpretations of it, which have assumed Greek philosophical ideas or European practice? Can we not re-interpret the Gospel in terms of the "new thought" even as Clement of Alexandria and others re-interpreted it in their day?

Students, ordinary village and town Christians, the leaders of the Churches—all alike are involved in this ferment of ideas. It has indeed been suggested that the simple Christian who loves Jesus is more likely to give correct answers than the more sophisticated scholars. There is some truth in this and yet the burden to give those right answers lies most heavily upon these latter men, the leaders of the various denominations. Their problem is made the more difficult in that the answers have to be not in the form of a carefully thought out essay but in the solutions they find to their day to day problems. Their answers must meet squarely the challenge of the present situation.

What, then, are some of the forms this challenge takes?

*The Charge of Imperialism*

Temporarily, though by no means finally, first in importance stands the charge of imperialism. At first sight this should have been easy to answer, and some at least among the leaders of the Church felt it need not be taken too seriously. It did not take long, however, for them to realize that they were mistaken and that they must face this challenge very seriously indeed.

The vast majority of Chinese Christians would have no hesitation in vouching for their missionary friends and in maintaining that they had come to China solely to preach the Gospel. But that is insufficient. The Church has an uneasy conscience in the matter, for historically Christianity came to China under the protection of gunboats and as a result of the unequal treaties following the Opium Wars. The missionaries themselves may have desired no such protection but in point of fact it was given and missionaries did at times claim what they regarded as their rights under the hated treaties.

But that is not all, for the word imperialism has modified its meaning under communism. Any country trading on a capitalist basis is by definition imperialist, no matter what its foreign policy may be. How then can missionaries fail to be tainted with imperialism, unless they have gone to great extremes to rid themselves of connections with their home lands?

The Church, through its manifesto (an unofficial but widely-signed document), its various synods and conferences but most of all through individual discussions, has made it clear that only after missionaries have left the country and foreign funds have ceased to be used for Church work will the Church be able to free itself completely from this charge in the eyes of the government. Basically it is for this reason that missionaries are leaving China to-day. The Church will be in a better position to witness to the fundamentals of the Christian faith when it can be shown that the charge of imperialism is a completely false one.

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A further question of great importance arises here, however. When missionaries have left China and when overseas funds have ceased to arrive for the support of Christian work, will the Church in China be able to continue within the ecumenical fellowship or will correspondence with the churches in other lands be regarded as an attempt to maintain imperialist links? It is too early to answer this question yet but the indications would seem to be that for a time at least the ties of international fellowship may be broken. Not that the Church desires that they should be. Far from it. But this may prove wiser in the interests of survival. How deep is the desire to feel the sense of belonging to something larger than a purely national Church can be seen from the almost naïve joy with which most Christians have come to learn recently that there is a Church in Russia.

The charge of imperialism can, of course, best be disposed of by Christians displaying complete support for the government and its programme. This indeed is what the government, with its attitude of "No Neutrality" demands. This again is what the Church has pledged itself to give at least so far as the "Common Political Platform" is concerned.

### *The Challenge of Marx-Leninist Philosophy*

When we turn from practices to principles, to the underlying Marx-Leninist philosophy, it is not so easy for the Church to be accommodating. The challenge does not, of course, come from the government as such, for religious freedom has been written into the constitution, but that does not alter the fact that the Christian, no matter who he is, is having constantly to listen to the teaching of dialectical materialism. Communist propaganda is amazing in its thoroughness and that in two directions. It is thorough in that it attempts to give a complete world-view. It is thorough also in its determination to reach all the people and to make them, as far as they are able, understand the deep principles on which communism is built as well as the present practices, which are derived from those principles.

This problem is therefore being faced day by day by ordinary Christians who are constantly being asked to give "a reason concerning the hope that is in" them. So long as it is a matter of positive witness, a good answer has usually been given. It is sad to find, however, how few Christians have an integrated world-view with which to meet questions which go even slightly beyond those which can be answered with a little simple Bible knowledge. Communists will slip out of the bag the scientific fact that "Men came from monkeys", expecting it to silence a Christian. All too frequently it does. This in most cases, however, is only a temporary set-back and with the passing of months Christians have learned more of what to expect and, more important, have thought more deeply about their faith and what it involves.

The Communist leaders have stated emphatically that they do not intend to persecute the Church. They are quite convinced, as they hasten to point out, that Christianity will die a natural death as the Communist State comes into existence. Christianity was a socially-determined phenomenon and as such will disappear as social conditions alter. This argument carries little weight with the Church, which is not nearly so disturbed by it as by scientific arguments.

The criticism, however, which to many is the most difficult to face and to answer is that the Church's ideas are pure idealism. This can be put in a very practical form and the Chinese are essentially a practical race. The Communists claim that the Christian preaching of love has done little or nothing to change the lot of the common people, even though that preaching has been going on for centuries. The Communist philosophy, however, has brought amazing results in a very short space of time.

#### *The Position of Christian Young People*

This argument appeals strongly to Christian young people desperately anxious as they are to serve their country. To them it often appears as if the Church has failed and

failed rather miserably. Perhaps they, the younger generation, can help to remove this stain on the Church by throwing themselves whole-heartedly, as avowed Christians, into the new social schemes put forward by the government. Sometimes this is possible but in all too many instances the young Christian finds after a few weeks that he (or she) is faced by those in authority with the straight alternatives of renouncing Christianity or leaving the organization concerned. It is a matter for deep thanksgiving that for every one who has renounced Christ, there are several who have utterly refused to do so.

Were these young people to be lost to the Church, the Church itself would not be entirely blameless. Of many it is true that they have been too sheltered. Doubts that they may have entertained have all too often been side-stepped instead of being faced squarely. Answers are now being demanded, and that in voices of considerable urgency. We have not, it must be admitted, given our young people a thorough grounding in the faith.

Nevertheless the great majority of them are standing firm. Attendance at services and Bible classes requires real courage these days and yet many groups have been able to report increases in membership during recent months. It takes more than courage to refuse a government grant towards one's education, when refusal means living without any financial resources for food or school fees.

#### *Christian Institutions and Social Service*

In the past the Church's touch with young people has been mainly through its schools. This is rapidly ceasing to be true. In some cases the government has taken over Christian schools. In others, government regulations are such as to make it extremely difficult to maintain the full Christian character of the institution concerned. Thus it is considered in many places to be a form of undue pressure should a Christian master in a school invite a boy to a Bible class. The boys themselves may organize a class out of

school hours and off the school premises, but that is all. Such regulations naturally affect junior schools more severely than senior ones, where the boys have more initiative and take responsibility more easily. It would furthermore appear to have been government policy to allow a greater measure of self-determination to the Universities and higher grade schools.

It should probably here be confessed that Christian Middle Schools have for many years been in a far from satisfactory condition. There are some glorious exceptions to that statement, but all too many of them had ceased to be a credit to the Church, from either the educational or spiritual point of view. The Christian educational system had become top-heavy and this applies to Universities as well as Middle Schools. Of all forms of missionary endeavour it was higher education that was the least well-integrated within the life of the Church. It was impossible for the Church to carry the great burden of these institutions, not merely financially—that was a small matter—but in producing a sufficient number of fully qualified teachers. Strangely enough it was more difficult to find Christian teachers for Middle Schools than it was for Universities.

The position of these latter institutions has become critical with the extension of the war in Korea and the consequent refusal of the American Government to allow funds to be sent to China. If the Universities were to remain open there was no alternative to receiving aid from the Chinese Government in one form or another. The Government very generously offered either to take over the Universities or to give them subsidies, whilst allowing them to remain private institutions. What the final outcome may be is still not quite clear but whatever happens it is obvious that the already fragile ties connecting the Universities with the Church are being strained still further.

The position of hospitals has been very similar to that of schools. Many of the most important of these have already been taken over by the government, which seems to have

followed a policy of absorbing the larger institutions first. In some cases, where missionaries have been on the staff, the government has asked them to continue and has become responsible for the salaries of the persons concerned. For the present, the smaller hospitals are continuing to run more or less as they were before.

With the disappearance of its institutions, the Church has been faced with a serious problem. Ought it to be content now with purely personal witness or ought it to endeavour to find some new kind of social service? The first reaction of most leaders was to emphasize the fact that the Church was something far greater than its institutions. Having established this point, the more pessimistic have been inclined to say that in the face of uncertainty all planning is futile. This attitude, however, was far from being general. More commonly, those concerned have been at pains to improve such institutions as still remain under Church control and to think out new forms of corporate witness. This last has been by no means easy but from certain places have come reports of nursery schools and small welfare clinics, whose work has been appreciated by people and government alike.

#### *Characteristics of the Church*

But for many, a question which far outweighs all problems of social witness is that of the internal life of the Church. A notable feature of the past year or so has been the steady increase of membership among those groups which preach a more authoritarian and other-worldly type of religion. This is partly due to the fact that, generally speaking, these groups have been indigenous or only loosely connected with the main missionary movement and thus not liable to the charge of imperialism. But there is also here an element of escapism together with the desire for an authoritarian religious creed with which to face a similar style of political one. Such groups naturally stress the given-ness of the Gospel, sometimes to the point of questioning the power of

the human reason to deal with such questions as those listed at the beginning of this article. Nevertheless, these same groups, with their love of the New Testament, have been driven back again to the study of it in order to make sure that the message they are proclaiming is the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

At the opposite end of the ecclesiastical scale are those who politically have always been extreme leftist. They are wholeheartedly in favour of the present régime and are anxious to re-interpret the Christian message in such a way as to minimize the difference between Christianity and the communist creed. Naturally these people are at present the most vocal, and are producing considerable quantities of literature on the subject. A study of this literature would suggest that, at least in some cases, the issues are not being faced quite squarely and that while, theoretically, some kind of synthesis is being attempted, in actual fact the religious and the political are being kept in two distinct compartments. None, however, can doubt the genuineness of the attempt.

Between these two extremes stands the great mass of Church people; Church leaders and ordinary Christians. Never in recent years has there been such a general and eager searching of the scriptures. The people feel very close to the Early Church. Not only are they able to find guidance and comfort through a study of the New Testament; for many it is the one source of relief from an almost overwhelming sense of loneliness. The Communion of Saints is gaining for them a new dimension.

### *Drawing Together*

Partly as a natural reaction to external pressure, partly on account of the severing of links with churches overseas, and partly from a realization that the Church is the "Fellowship of love", Christians have been drawing closer together in

the last year or so. This is true within particular congregations as well as in wider, national groups.

Not that it is always easy for this desire to express itself in outward action. In some parts of China during the period of Land Reform all Church services and meetings of any sort whatsoever have been forbidden. Even before re-distribution of the land was started, there were certain country districts where local officials did not allow the Church to hold meetings. Reluctance to grant travel permits has often resulted in scattered congregations being unvisited for long periods. Nevertheless Christians have been very conscious of each other and where meetings have been allowed, there has been a much deeper sense of fellowship.

To some this has seemed to be the moment to press for organic Church Union. The proposal, however, is viewed with misgiving by many, as it is feared the model would be more likely to be that of the Church of Japan than that of the Church of South India. Not that a great deal is known of the precise organization of either of these bodies by most of the leaders of the Church in China. If a form of Union does come to be worked out in due course, it is most probable that it will be an adaptation of existing machinery; the main considerations being utilitarian rather than theological.

Another aspect of this drawing together, and in some ways the most encouraging, is the determination that the Church shall be self-supporting. This is no mere slogan with which to satisfy nationalist aspirations. It has resulted in sacrificial giving by Christians, many of them pitifully poor, who have suddenly realized that unless they give, the Church may disintegrate. In some places Church members are tithing their incomes. In others pastor and people together are working a piece of machinery in their odd hours to provide for the needs of the pastor and his family. These efforts are the product and in part also the source of the realization that the Church belongs to the people as well as the people belonging to the Church.

*The Future*

It is with a sense of adventure, albeit with trepidation also, that the Church in China faces the future. The most important single factor in the situation is that the Church in China has faith in God; not simply an intellectual appreciation of His existence but a deep assurance that He is their God and that He is able to deal adequately with the particular circumstances in which they find themselves. Without such a faith the plight of the Church might well be hopeless.

There are indeed some observers who, seeing the crippling of the Church's institutions and the pressure to which Christians are subjected, predict a very great shrinking in Church membership, if not the ultimate disappearance of the Church. This last is hardly likely, though some loss of Church members is to be expected. The Christian Movement, through the Universities, and through medical work, has always been much wider than the Church itself. If this distinction can be drawn without misunderstanding, it may be true to say that the Christian Movement is breaking down but the Church is standing firm. One of the surprising facts of recent months has been the number of places that have been able to report an increase in membership.

The Church is determined to stand firmly on matters of essential faith, whilst compromising on all non-essentials. Naturally the line between the two is not always easy to draw and it is more than likely that no Chinese Christian would draw the line in the same place that the average western Christian would. In this, however, they must be the judges and we must seek to appreciate the various considerations that they have in mind in coming to their conclusions.

This is not the first time that the Church in China has had to stand alone without the support of foreign missionaries. It did so in 1927. About half of the churches had to do so during the recent war. On both occasions the Church came through strengthened by the experience. We can now only pray that, by the grace of God, the same may be even more abundantly true this time.

“CALEB”

## THE FINAL ARBITER

THE final arbiter of China's destiny stands knee deep in the mud of the paddy fields, his face now turned to the land he tends and now lifted to look down the valley in which he and his neighbours live out a life both narrow and deep. That life is as narrow as the problem of raising enough for a family of five persons from three acres of ground and as deep as the culture which stretches back to the dawn of Chinese history.

In the north he struggles with the great loess plain, to the west he tills the mountain slopes, in the centre and to the east he repairs the terraces which contour the rolling hills. His ways differ enormously because of the vastness of the land but in every corner he is the farmer of the centuries, whose life has known no break in continuity. He is the father of the great men whose names stud the Nation's history ; the unyielding pragmatist who tests life by its food, its social relationships, its fecundity and its peace.

The farmers, with rural scholars, gentry, merchants and innkeepers make up eighty-nine per cent of the whole Chinese people. There can be no permanent change in the nation without them. There are less than fifty cities which contain more than one hundred thousand persons. Even in these cities there are two periods every year in which the clerks drop their pens and the shopkeepers lay down their trading to return to the villages to look after their rural interests. He is a strange and wretched Chinese who is quite cut off from the land. Chinese population increases at the rate of three million persons a year and more than the eighty-nine per cent of these births are among the country people. The cities of to-morrow are even now being provided with population—in the country. It is the seedbed of the nation.

A glance down the story of Chinese literature shows at once that, from its beginning, what has happened to these farmers, their land, their families, has ever been the criterion

by which thought and practice, innovation and conservation have been ruled. China's story begins with legends of the great ones who invented tillage, harnessed rivers and introduced crops. It goes on through the great classical writings testing each emperor's success or failure by whether or not he remembered the farmer. This test is applied as relentlessly as the Old Testament judges its kings by whether or not they did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Perhaps the two tests, separated by so many miles, are really one.

Can the New People's Democracy face that test? Can it win the farmer's heart? Underlying the discussion of the international consequences of China's change this other hoary drama is being enacted anew. A system of government is arraigned at the bar which is set up on the open space outside the farmhouse where for centuries the grain has been beaten free of its chaff. How much grain is there this time?

The Chinese farmer's life looks like a field ripe for Communist exploitation. It bristles with economic and social difficulties. The would-be reformer has only to walk between the hills up which the farms straggle in Central China to be impressed by the tightly packed cropping, which begins with the flooded terraces on the lower levels, crowds itself into the dry tillage higher up and goes on in layers of shrubs to the neatly combed azalea thickets which provide fuel on the hill tops. He cannot but notice the absence of grazing or leys. There are no sheep or beasts. Here or there, perhaps, there may be one goat—though many localities forbid them—it is just possible that a few ducks swim in the stream at the foot of the hill. He will hear the voice of the pig, only to trace him down to a shed somewhere from which he never emerges. It is a world of growing crops. Ninety per cent of the land is under them: compared with forty-two per cent in the United States of America. Rice, wheat, kaoliang, millet, maize dominate the land. There is no room for the luxury of passing green foods and grain through animals and eating a meat diet.

Twice a month, on the first day and the fifteenth of the lunar month a little meat features, perhaps, in the family meal. These are great days. Once a year, in villages near to the market towns, beef will appear in the diet in pieces as big as a thumb nail. That day is the festival of Confucius and an ox is slain in his honour. The rest of the days contain a diet of rice and vegetable with a little bean curd as protein—for the more fortunate farmers, in average years. Even this is reduced in bad years—years of flood, drought, military calamity or years in which many years' taxes are collected at once. In such years the rice is sold, too valuable to eat and the family sits down to strips of dried sweet potato and gets up from table bulging but unnourished. Of these simple meals there are but two in a winter's day and three in the long summer days. This very household rule of suiting the number of meals to the length of daylight hours speaks of a standard of existence upon which world Communism reckons to build revolution most successfully.

The farmer fits into this picture of poverty. He works bared to the waist in summer and in winter is shielded only by a faded cotton jacket. It is therefore easy to pick out on his body the marks of the tough life which he leads. To an unaccustomed eye he seems to be a collection of injuries. His legs are scarred with wounds which have healed with cicatrices, there may be an open sore on his leg. His eyes are often sore with trachoma and if he is of any considerable age his sight is impaired. His teeth are like an old, broken down grave-yard. Bald patches on his head reveal where he has struggled with scalp disease in childhood. The loose skin hangs in folds round his tanned middle telling of the unequal rhythm of his feeding. With chilblains, cracked hands or inflamed eyes he works on, never stopping until he can go no longer. He is at work weeks after his town-artizan fellow worker is signed off sick. It is just part of life.

His wife lives the same austere life. Her clothes too are the simple faded blue of the countryside, patched and

resewn again and again. She bears her many children and works on. Three days after her confinement she is down at the river bank laundering the soiled clothing and chattering of her condition to the other women squatted beside her. Her eyes lose their vision sooner even than her husband's for she spends much time over the fuming cooking stove in the chimneyless kitchen. She feeds her child at the breast on into the second and third year for that food is easy come by and is not to be wasted. Perhaps, too, she believes that the nursing will delay a while the coming of the next baby.

Home is a dilapidated courtyard surrounded by a wall at the front and rambling buildings round the other three sides of the square. The mud wall is breached and worn with the years of rain, the maingate is sun-cracked and covered with yawning gaps. Paper windows stare out blind-eyed into the courtyard. Within, the house is dark, filled with reeking wood smoke in the winter and humming with mosquitoes in the summer evenings or stifling with the fumes of the brushwood lit to drive out the mosquitoes. Beds are in tiny rooms deep in the homestead and are shut in by bed-curtains. Tacked on to the back of the house is a common latrine pit in a shed. Farm tools, buckets, festoons of drying potato tops lie everywhere and fill the unceiled rafters.

Over everything there is an air of decayed order. The older parts of building are stone, carved and generous. The newer parts are rough, mud-built and poor. Bits of fine old furniture jostle with the roughest bamboo stools. Curling roofs look down on cheap home-fired tiles or thatch.

Here are hungry people, lacking medicine, lacking education, living in comfortless houses. It is enough to make the reformer's fingers itch to be busy. The difficulties begin and the other side of the picture is revealed if he lets his fingers have their way.

In fact this poverty-line world is a world of happy, dignified people. Life has its order, its discipline, its standards. The farming folk are proud of it and despise its opposite when they hear of it. The standards of the villages may be good, they may be bad, the point of importance is that they are accepted. Here is poverty become the expression of culture. Here are difficulties woven into a social pattern of harmonious relationship which rests upon centuries of belief. Hungry people can laugh, uneducated people can think. Rural people can stand in independent dignity facing a hostile world of weather and farming hazards. There is fun in life.

In passing from the outward appearance of this civilization through to its spirit perhaps the key word is "dignity". There is a right way to do everything, even starving. The man who follows it is at peace and has leisure from himself, even on the poverty line. The visitor invited to enter the main room of a house is struck by the age-old words of courtesy which welcome him. They fall from the country lips in the country dialect but they are straight from the pure well of Chinese culture. "Deign to enter". "My home is unworthy". "You have travelled far, come sit higher". The phrases are terse four character quotations from the Wen-li of an ancient cultured gentry. They are also alive, that is, spoken in sincerity and with the meanings they were coined to convey. Here is culture alive. Tea is served with the same ritual as in the boasted tea ceremonies of polished Japanese homes. The young sit quietly in their proper places and are frowned upon or dismissed if the guest's lack of polished conduct makes them smile.

The home is shown to the visitor with a quiet pride and as he goes from room to room illiterate womenfolk speak words and make actions which belong to the age of chivalry.

Should the friendship ripen into intimacy the townsman will soon realize that he himself is very quaint. The troubles he has, to scale himself down to the line of poverty on which he is called to live become the jokes of the young people and

children and make the toothless crones of the inner rooms rock with laughter as the children imitate them. He knows himself to be inept. Must he make all those preparations to go to bed? Is eating so dreadfully difficult that it needs all those tools? He complains perhaps at the ankle deep mud in the courtyard. With careful patience he is shown a pair of stilted wooden clogs and told they are the remedy. Why complain of lack of roads when every man has the answer in his clogs? Soon he is leaning against the door-post on a summer evening eating his evening meal, tables, table-covers all forgotten or he is self-extruded from a living community.

This living community is so strongly knit and so old that it is a thing with which people must come to terms. It will not come to terms with them. Its hierarchy of power is fixed, running down through the ranks of age in both sexes. Its ways are fixed by immemorial precedents which live on in the mind, not on statute books. Let the government, for example, ban the sale of all lunar calendars and paste the countryside thick with posters about the farmer's year in terms of the solar calendar. What does it matter? The rain washes off the posters but the proper seasons for planting, hoeing, transplanting, are safe, in lunar terms, in the heads of the village elders.

A governing power may decree that certain persons are public enemies, if the persons concerned are part of the villages' life they will remain so. Communist government in one area tore up all the landmarks and destroyed the registers of land in an attempt to communalize the countryside for the farmers. Five years later the farmers put back every land mark, working solely from the memories of their elders.

This ordered society is the descendent of Confucian thinking. While that system has been spurned for years in great city schools, here it remains alive and regulative here. No one knows its strength until he touches it. Take the young men for a social project, for example, without first taking counsel

with their elders and the place straightway bristles with difficulties. Attempt to bring new ways of midwifery to the young women without first enlisting the older and the whole place stiffens into non-co-operation.

The years of revolution have, of course, seen many attempts to change these places. There are "official" officials, government paid, but the old government goes on beneath their noses and they had better be content. Life gets very difficult if they are not.

Under everything is a tremendous sense that farming is life and that interference with the social life of farming people is offensive to the unseen spirits of the earth, air and water. In a word, there is a deep religious current running below the village ways. Temples may be derelict or used as government offices, ordered religious self-expression may have become a mere Taoist secret cult, but true religion binds life together.

This whole life can be seen dramatized when the village turns out for a funeral. The hills reverberate to the thunder of fire-crackers and the boom of the gong. The sacrificial smoke climbs slowly through the air. The people, now dressed in the soiled festival clothes, taken from chests under their beds, fall into their proper places in the procession. There is tremendous excitement and shouting, there is seeming disorder and improvisation but under it all there is the cohesion which is a land based four-square on a way which it really believes. Heaven, earth, hills and valleys fall into their places. Even God does not overstep Himself. He accepts the statutory gifts and is content. The small boys from nearby villages who are at the feast know just how many dumplings are their share on this particular occasion, a share related to their connection with the deceased. The very dead knows his place, the coffin in which he lies and the white soled shoes on his feet were all prepared precisely as they should be before he died. He saw to that himself.

Change in this tightly formed society there must be. The pressures of the age demand it, the poverty of the people demands it, but how? It is change that must come to a people largely content in their tight, poverty-ridden world. The rural Christian Church in the years between 1928 and 1938 found ways of changing it. The pioneers humbly went down to the place where the people live. They obeyed the order of General Chiang, "Tao Ming Chien"—"Get down to the people". They lived there till they loved the folk and the folk liked them, then out of patient counsel and untiring pressure they effected minor changes, content to see a little crown a great effort. They worked with reverent fingers, giving their medicines in a vehicle of prayer and slowly spoken explanation. Co-operative Societies were formed in acts of worship. They vaccinated in the name of God. They taught old women to read, and changes in babycraft and midwifery followed on from those classes.

This method worked change from the inside, by consent, nothing was scrapped from motives of sheer iconoclasm. Everything was retained which could be used. The people themselves were the agents of their own change. The thing went at their speed, slowly, quietly, with dignity. Christianity does not rush people even into heaven.

Can the New Democracy stoop to this patient work? Will the headlong rush of government swing the whole life forcibly into line? Will there be a terrific smashing of the old to clear the site for rebuilding? We have seen how swiftly the New Government has swept away workers and work in its relations to the missionary staff. It is in a hurry. Blood is flowing.

Can it enter into a heritage which is essentially spiritual and handle the material things which express that spirit in such ways as not to create opposition? The missionary, for example, has often treated demented people with drugs and made them well, but he has always done it accepting the

local diagnosis of demon possession. Can a materialism do this?

Christianity is a series of truths which can be articulated into any order of civilization. In England it is English, in rural China it can be made to express itself in terms of poverty and simplicity. It is true to itself in cathedral and mud hut alike. Is this true of the Communist way? Is it not rather a water-tight, complete whole which descends from above ready-made to be jammed into position even if things be crushed by its weight?

It has been said that the cities are the nation's head. If this is so the farms may well be called its stomach. A fool dictates to his stomach; a wise man consults it.

DOUGLAS THOMPSON.

## REVIEWS

*New China: Three Views.* Published Turnstile Press, 1950. 9s. 6d.

Questions asked by all who are interested in China include these: What is the real character of the change which has taken place there? How do the people of China take it? What is the attitude to foreigners? What are the real relations between China and Russia? How is the new order likely to develop?

Turning to *New China: Three Views* with such questions in mind, we find the essays by Mr. Otto van der Sprengel, M. Guillain (of *Le Monde*) and Mr. Michael Lindsay are not altogether synoptic. Further, they are already in need of revision. As Mr. Kingsley Martin says in a vigorous introduction, "events move fast". They have moved fast enough to make some statements in these essays out of date. Nevertheless the book is a useful introduction, containing as it does eighty pages of assorted Chinese documents, and the reports of three observers qualified in various ways both to observe and to judge what they saw.

It is common ground that the revolution has brought material improvements, and effected a general release from almost impossible economic conditions into which China had drifted. In a negative sense at any rate the people of China welcomed the change. Those who suffered from the fantastic inflation of money, peasant farmers

who were burdened with iniquitous rates of rent and taxation, rejoiced at the prospect of liberation. The masses acquiesced in it. Large numbers of students and intellectual persons worked for it.

In this book however there is a diversity of view about that terrible fact of "the price in human values" which must be paid in return for blessings brought by the new democracy. M. Guillain, in his brilliant articles, sees the possibilities and utters a warning : "they are instituting a political framework and an ideological discipline that are bound to lead to the restriction of civil liberties and the tyranny of the orthodox". Again, "the Peking regime is totalitarian. Those who do not agree with it will have to submit or be left aside. There is no hope of liberty for the Chinese". One of his chapters is called, "From Velvet Glove to Iron Hand".

Mr. van der Sprenkel is more uncritical. Some of his statements in fact look ridiculous in the light of recent news from China, and we must pass over in awed silence part of Sir John Pratt's letter, quoted with approval by Mr. Kingsley Martin. "Whatever be the pattern in other parts of the world," writes van der Sprenkel, "in China no 'curtain' has been drawn between the foreigners and the Chinese". He speaks of "free and unembarrassed intercourse". Again, about missionaries he says, "It would be wrong to minimize the difficulties that exist, but there appear to be no real grounds for despondency or defeatism in the missionary field in the New China". No comment is needed. In the same way, his description of the effects of the revolution on the universities may have been true for a time over a wider field than the author's own limited experience. He would surely have to revise his facts, however, and also as an enlightened teacher his judgements, if he were writing on the situation in the colleges to-day.

The three contributors throw no fresh light on relations between China and Russia. They agree that inept statements from the United States have inclined the Chinese more steeply towards the Soviet Union, that doctrinaire affinities, practical necessities, and diplomatic agreements have drawn them together, and that the Russians have been careful not to repeat past errors. M. Guillain's characteristic caution is displayed when he writes on this subject, "for the time being all goes well".

The shortest article is by Mr. Michael Lindsay, but it is the most thoughtful and most rewarding to study. He develops his now well-known view that the future of China depends greatly upon whether its leaders are prepared to modify their theories in the light of facts,

or whether, like the dogmatists in every age, they make all facts fit what we may be excused for calling their intoxicating doctrines. No lasting good, and often tragic crimes, are committed by those who are getting blind drunk. Many who know China well rest their hopes on the customary sobriety of the Chinese, which is quite as characteristic as occasional wildness.

F. G. H.

*Religion in Chinese Garment.* By KARL LUDWIG REICHELT. Lutterworth Press. 15s. od.

"It is characteristic of Buddhism," writes Dr. Reichelt in his recent book *Religion in Chinese Garment*, "that it always seeks the most beautiful locations for its temples and monasteries. So it has done in India and Burma, in Ceylon and Japan, and so also in China. The most charming hillsides, beautiful river islands, arresting sites on river banks, narrow mountain passes, and above all mountain tops—all have in the course of time been occupied by temples, monasteries and pagodas."

It is characteristic of Dr. Reichelt that his life-time of effort to interpret the Christ to Buddhist monks in a guise they can understand has found expression in a monastery superbly sited on a spur of the hills behind Kowloon. The view stretches down a well-cultivated valley flanked by steep bare hills, themselves reflected in a long arm of the sea, and away in the far distance a majestic range of mountains breaks the horizon.

Tao Feng Shan is a place of pilgrimage and resort to which over the years many a Buddhist monk and pilgrim has found his way. Arriving he has found himself at once at home, not only in surroundings of great natural beauty, but also in a group of buildings which reflect his own age-old Buddhist culture. Within the walls of this place of quiet and meditation is a routine such as might be found in any one of a thousand Buddhist monasteries across Asia. Yet Tao Feng Shan is not a Buddhist monastery. It is a radiating centre of the Christian Gospel and at its heart is an exquisite Chapel which is as Christian a place of worship as it is Chinese, as Chinese as it is Christian.

Here is expressed the spirit of Dr. Reichelt's mission to identify himself as intimately as possible with Buddhist culture, and with the mind of China as that has been moulded by Buddhism, not in order to achieve a syncretism but in order to bring every treasure and beauty of Buddhist life and thought captive to Christ.

Octagonal in shape, or so it presents itself to my vision now looking back to when I saw it four years ago, the roof is supported by pillars carved in traditional pattern. Behind the altar is a most remarkable reredos with a great cross in Chinese design. The lotus plays a distinctive part in the decorations. The use of this emblem in Asia has sometimes invited the criticism that as the Lotus symbolizes the separation of the holy from contamination with the unholy it is therefore an inadequate symbol of the Incarnation. But at Tao Feng Shan the Lotus is interpreted as purity emerging from the slime, which if not a primary idea of the Christian faith, is at least from one point of view a parable of the Christian life.

And this Christian monastery is concerned to demonstrate the Christian life in the Buddhist vernacular. Some evidence of the effectiveness of this demonstration is that during the last twenty years some 120 Buddhist monks have been baptized and several have become ordained ministers of the Christian Church. These men were drawn to the Christ not by argument but a way of life which they saw and could understand and which yet beckoned to them as transcending anything in their own experience.

MAX WARREN.

*A Solovyov Anthology* is the title of the book recommended to *Frontier* readers by Dr. E. Lampert in his article on Solovyov in last month's issue. This selection from the writings of the great Russian thinker is edited by S. L. Frank and translated by Natalie Duddington, and published by the S.C.M. Press at 18s. net.

### Advance Notice

An excellent study of the predicament of Chinese Christians and their reactions to it will be given in the book entitled *Christian Witness in Communist China* by "Barnabas". This is to be published in June or July by the S.C.M. Press, price 4s. od.

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